AP/215

In re application of: Reiner KRAFT et al.
Serial No.: 09/607,289
Filed: June 30, 2000
For: SYSTEM FOR MANAGING AN EXCHANGE OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THROUGH AN EXPERT ANSWER WEB SITE

Mail Stop Appeal Brief- Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Transmitted herewith, in triplicate, is Appellant's Brief in support of its appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences from the decision dated May 19, 2004 of the Examiner finally rejecting claims 1-34 of the above-referenced application.

[X] A petition for extension of time is enclosed.

[X] The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment in the amount of $ 500.00 to cover the filing fee to Deposit Account No. 09-0441.

[X] The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment in the amount of $450.00 to cover the extension fee to Deposit Account No. 50-1556.

[X] The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any necessary fees associated with this communication, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 09-0441.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: December 20, 2004

By: _____
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PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of:	)	
Reiner KRAFT et al.	)	Group Art Unit: 2157
Serial No.: 09/607,289	)	
Filed: June 30, 2000	)	Examiner: Sahera HALIM
For: *SYSTEM FOR MANAGING AN EXCHANGE OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THROUGH AN EXPERT ANSWER WEB SITE*	)	

APPELLANT'S BRIEF UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.192

MAIL STOP APPEAL BRIEF-PATENT
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450
ATTN: Examiner Sahera HALIM

Sir:

This Appellant's Brief is filed in response to a Final Office Action dated May 19, 2004 and a Notice of Appeal filed August 19, 2004, the due date which has been extended by the enclosed petition for extension of time to Monday December 20, 2004 (the first business day after December 19, 2004). Reconsideration of the Application, reversal of the rejections and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Table Of Contents For Each Section Of this Response

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: MS Appeal Brief Patent Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 or facsimile transmitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on the date December 20, 2004, 2004 By: Karen Taragowski
Signature: Karen Taragowski Applicant, Assignee, or Representative

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I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest is International Business Machines (IBM) of Armonk, NY.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no related appeals or interferences.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-34 are pending. Claims 1-34 were finally rejected in the Office Action dated May 19, 2004 (Paper No. 8). Claims 1-34 are on appeal.

Attached hereto is an Appendix containing a copy of claims 1-34 (in their current form by the Amendment After Final filed on July 19, 2004 entered on the August 13, 2004 Advisory Action), which are the claims involved in this appeal.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

The Examiner issued a rejection of claims 1-34 in the Final Office Action May 19, 2004. An Amendment After Final was filed on July 19, 2004 amending the claims and the Examiner issued an Advisory Action on August 13, 2004, maintaining the rejection and entered the Amendment After Final.

V. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to systems and methods and computer program products to automate the exchange of questions and answers by experts through a web environment. The present invention includes an expert ranking database for maintaining a list of experts in given categories. Ranking of experts is important when choosing an

expert. The expert ranking database uses many factors to rank an expert including an indication of both the quality and timeliness of the expert in responding to the question. See the Present Invention as originally filed at pages 8-10. The timeliness and quality of the experts past performance is important when a user selects which expert to engage in answering a question. Timeliness is important in selecting a given expert because many problems, such as computer technical problems, need to be addressed within a given time period. Timeliness is especially important in situations where a computer system or network is down. See the Present Invention as originally filed at pages 2-3. There may be deadlines for receiving responses which if missed affects the experts ranking. See the Present Invention as originally filed at pages 18-20.

VI. ISSUE

Whether claims 1-34 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Nielsen (U.S. Patent No. 5,948,054) (Hereinafter "*Nielsen*") in view of Dworkin et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,026,148) (Hereinafter "*Dworkin*").

VII. GROUPING OF CLAIMS

- Group I: Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 33, and 34 stand or fall together.
- Group II: Claims 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 25, and 26 stand or fall together.
- Group III: Claims 12, 13, 27, and 28 stand or fall together.
- Group IV: Claims 14, 15, 29, and 30 stand or fall together.

VIII. ARGUMENT

A. WHETHER CLAIMS 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 33, and 34 ARE UNPATENTABLE OVER NIELSEN IN VIEW OF DWORKIN

In the Examiner's Office Action of May 19, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 1-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nielsen (U.S. 5,948,054) in view of Dworkin et al. (U.S. 6,026,148). Appellant respectfully submits that claims 1-34 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Nielsen in view of Dworkin because neither Nielsen or Dworkin Grimes, nor any combination of these references, teach the limitations claimed for the present invention. Specifically for each of the groups of claims:

Group I Claims: The cited references do not teach the timeliness of an expert in providing answers which affects that ranking in an expert ranking database.

Group II Claims: The cited references do not teach the claimed elements, of Group I. Further, the cited references to not teach a timer for timing the time for an expert to answer a question and adjusting the expert's ranking according to the time taken.

Group III Claims: The cited references do not teach the claimed elements, of Group I. Further, the cited references to not teach receiving an explicit declination to answer the question and adjusting the ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.

Group IV Claims: The cited references do not teach the claimed elements, of Group I. Further, the cited references to not teach receiving from the expert that the time is too short and adjusting the ranking score in accordance with other experts available that are able to respond in a timely manner.

Group I (Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 33, and 34)

Appellant respectfully asserts that the Group I claims distinguish over the prior art of record. Appellant suggests using independent claim 1 as a representative claim for this group. Claim 1 is directed to a system to automate the selecting of an expert to answer a question based on ranking of the expert. Claim 1 further specifies that expert

is chosen "based on the item of information indicative of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by each expert."

The Nielsen reference is directed to a system for facilitating the exchange of information between human users in a networked computer system. Nielsen, Abstract. The Examiner correctly points out that "*Nielsen does not teach that the selection of expert based on timeliness of an expert in providing answers*." Final Office Action dated May 19, 2004, at page 4 and the Examiner goes on to combine Nielsen with Dworkin.

Appellant respectfully disagree that Dworkin, as asserted by the Examiner, teaches "an expert ranking database" where the ranking of the expert is "the selection of expert based on timeliness of an expert in providing answers" in the Final Office Action, page 4.

Further the Examiner on page 4 of the Final Office Action points (Paper No. 8) to Dworkin for disclosing "*... a system where the user is given the opportunity to direct a question to an expert of his or her choice and that choice could be based on anything, time matching of words, subject, expert qualification, etc (col. 7, lines 6-27)*." (Emphasis Added). The cited portion of Dworkin at col. 7, lines 6-27 is reproduced below for convenience with emphasis added:

> In the example given above, there was only one expert respondent at one time, each respondent being "on duty" for a predetermined period of time. As mentioned above, there could instead be more than one expert available at the same time. The user could be given the opportunity to direct a question to an expert of his or her choice. Alternatively, the system can be programmed to direct the question to a particular expert respondent. One way of choosing the expert is to analyze the key words appearing in a question, and comparing those key words with the key words appearing in a biography of the expert. The greater the number of matches between the two sets of words, the greater the likelihood that the expert is appropriate to respond to the question. In another alternative, the system could ask the user to indicate a subject, from a menu of possible subjects, and the system would then choose an expert according to the subject selected. The invention is not limited by the manner of choosing

an expert, however, and much simpler and more unintelligent means of making the choice could be used instead, within the scope of the invention. For example, a question could be assigned at random to any available expert respondent.

The Appellant submits Dworkin fails to teach or suggest "an expert ranking database" where the ranking of the expert is "the selection of expert based on timeliness of an expert in providing answers". The Appellant respectfully submit that the Examiner is confounding a concept of "*time matching of words*"[1] with "an expert ranking database" where the ranking of the expert is "the selection of expert based on timeliness of an expert in providing answers." Dworkin explicitly teaches choosing an expert by subject and key words. There is no ranking of the experts taught in Nielsen taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin. The phrase used by the Examiner of "*time matching words*" refers to known search techniques in databases for key word and subject matching, such as key word and subject matching as taught by Dworkin above. In fact most web-based search engines use key word and subject matching. However, searching by the key words and subject is not the same as searching with a ranking of expert including the quality and timeliness of providing answers. In fact the word "time" as used to mean "speedy" or "quick" is never used in Dworkin.

Further "*time matching of words*" as stated by the Examiner is not even an explicit teaching of "an expert ranking database for maintaining a list of experts in one or more categories along with an item of information indicative of timeliness of an expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by an expert." The Examiner relies on the phrase in Dworkin of "*[T]he invention is not limited by the manner of choosing an expert, however, and much simpler and more unintelligent means of making the choice could be used instead, within the scope of the invention*" without more as a teaching of this limitation. This is the only support cited by the Examiner that Dworkin teaches or

[1] Appellant is unclear what the Examiner is intended meaning of "time" in the phrase with "*time matching words*" since this phrase appears no where in the present invention nor the Dworkin and for the sake of this appeal interprets the Examiner's comment to mean "matching words over time."

suggests a ranking of each expert, where the ranking is stored in a ranking database and the expert including his/her ranking is derived from one or more categories along with an item of information indicative of timeliness of an expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by an expert." The Appellant respectfully disagrees with this unsupported leap. Dworkin is only suggesting or teaching key word matching and subject matching.

Therefore, because the Nielsen reference taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin makes no mention of "an expert ranking database" which includes information related to the "timeliness of each expert" in responding to questions posed, independent claim 1 distinguishes over the Nielsen reference taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin. The Nielsen reference does not teach, anticipate, or suggest all of the recited elements of independent claims 1, 5, 16, 20 and 31.

Continuing further, when there is no suggestion or teaching in the prior art for "indicative of timeliness of an expert in providing answers" the suggestion can not come from the Applicant's own specification. The Federal Circuit has repeatedly warned against using the Applicant's disclosure as a blueprint to reconstruct the claimed invention out of isolated teachings of the prior art. See MPEP §2143 and *Grain Processing Corp. v. American Maize-Products*, 840 F.2d 902, 907, 5 USPQ2d 1788 1792 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Fitch*, 972 F.2d 160, 12 USPQ2d 1780, 1783-84 (Fed. Cir. 1992). The prior art reference Nielsen taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin does not even suggest, teach or mention ranking experts based on timeliness. Therefore, the Examiner's rejection should be reversed and it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claims 1, 5, 16, 20 and 31 are in a condition for allowance.

Further, because independent claims 1, 5, 16, 20 and 31 distinguish over the Nielsen reference taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin, dependent claims 2-4, 6-15, 17-19, 21-30 and 32-34, also distinguish over the Nielsen reference. Therefore, the Nielsen reference taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin does not teach, anticipate or suggest all of the recited elements of dependent claims 2-4, 6-15, 17-19, 21-30 and 32-34. Therefore, the Examiner's rejection should be reversed. It is respectfully submitted that dependent claims 2-4, 6-15, 17-19, 21-30 and 32-34 are in a condition for allowance.

Group II (Claims 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 25, and 26)

Appellant respectfully assert that the present Group II claims distinguish over the prior art of record for the reasons stated above in Group I, since all the claims in this Group II are dependent from claims in Group I. Appellant suggests using claim 3 as a representative claim for this group. Claim 3 is directed to a system which is dependent on independent claim 1, where "an expert timer is used for timing the time taken by an expert to answer the question." The Group II claims add a limitation specifying that the expert's ranking in the ranking database is adjusted based on "a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question."

The Examiner correctly points out that "*Nielsen and Dworkin fail to explicitly disclose an expert timer manager for timing the time taken to answer the question and a ranking manager for adjusting information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question.*" Final Office Action dated May 19, 2004 at page 4 and goes on to state "*However, it would be obvious for one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include a (sic) an expert timer (sic)"* without any further support. Appellant asserts that the limitation of the Group II claims in not inherently obvious as the Examiner suggests.

The cited references do not teach the limitation of Group II so these two references can not be combined as suggested by the Examiner. Further, Appellant assert that the cited references do not provide a motivation for combining any teaching of creating an expert ranking database with a indication of timeliness where the timeliness is calculated using an expert timer even if these limitations were taught. Appellant respectfully asserts that the only motivation to combine these two ideas comes from the Appellant's own application. The Federal Circuit has repeatedly warned against using the Applicant's disclosure as a blueprint to reconstruct the claimed invention out of isolated teachings of the prior art. See MPEP §2143 and *Grain Processing Corp. v. American Maize-Products*, 840 F.2d 902, 907, 5 USPQ2d 1788 1792 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Fitch*, 972 F.2d 160, 12 USPQ2d 1780, 1783-84 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

More recently, the Federal Circuit again took up the identical question of Obviousness in combining references in the case *In re Sang Su Lee*, 277 F.3d 1338 (Fed. Cir. 2002). In this case, the Board of Patent Appeals rejected all of Applicant's pending claims as obvious under § 103. The Federal Circuit vacated and remanded. Citing two prior art references, the Board stated that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to combine the references based on "common knowledge" and "common sense," but it did not present any specific source or evidence in the art that would have otherwise suggested the combination. The Federal Circuit held that the Board's rejection of a need for any specific hint or suggestion in the art to combine the references was both legal error and arbitrary agency action subject to being set aside by the court under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). Accordingly, with the suggestion or motivation found in Nielsen taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin, the Examiner has failed to properly establish a prima facie case of obviousness of the invention as a "whole." The Appellant submit the present invention distinguishes over Nielsen taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin for at least this reason as we

Group III (Claims 12, 13, 27, and 28)

Appellant respectfully assert that the present Group III claims distinguish over the prior art of record for the reasons stated above in Group I, since all the claims in this Group III are dependent from the claims in Group I. In addition, Appellant suggests using claim 12 as a representative claim for this group. Claim 12 is directed to a method dependent on independent claim 5, which further includes receiving "an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert" and "adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination."

The Examiner correctly points out that "*Nielsen and Dworkin do not teach receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert and adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.*" Final Office Action dated May 19, 2004 at page 8 and goes on to state "*[H]owever, it would be obvious for one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Nielsen and Dworkin by the above limitations to achieve customer stratification (sic) by taking into account conditions such the expert (sic) declining to*

answer the question, the time take to decline answer (sic), the method used to decline answer etc." without any further support. The Appellant respectfully submits that the Examiner is using hindsight reconstruction as a blue print to reconstruct the claimed invention without teaching of the cited references.

Further appellant asserts that the cited references do not provide a motivation for combining any teaching of ranking based on an explicit declination and adjusting a ranking score associated with an expert. Appellant respectfully asserts that the only motivation to combine these two ideas comes from the Appellant's own application, even if they were taught. The Federal Circuit has repeatedly warned against using the Applicant's disclosure as a blueprint to reconstruct the claimed invention out of isolated teachings of the prior art. See MPEP §2143 and *Grain Processing Corp. v. American Maize-Products*, 840 F.2d 902, 907, 5 USPQ2d 1788 1792 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Fitch*, 972 F.2d 160, 12 USPQ2d 1780, 1783-84 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

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Group IV (Claims 14, 15, 29, and 30)

Appellant respectfully asserts that the present Group IV claims distinguish over the prior art of record for the reasons stated above in Group I and Group III, since all the claims in Group IV are dependent from claims in Group III which depend from Group I. In addition, Appellant suggests using claim 14 as a representative claim for this group. Claim 14 is directed to a method dependent on independent claim 5, which further includes receiving "sending an indication for answering the question to an expert; and receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time is too short."

The Examiner correctly points out that "*Nielsen does not disclose receiving a message from the expert that the time is too short.*"[2] Final Office Action Dated May 19, 2004 at page 9 and goes on to state "*[H]owever, it would be obvious for one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Nielsen by adding the limitation of receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short because it would let the question poser know why the question was not answered, the allowing the question poser to make appropriate decisions.*" without any further support. The Appellant respectfully submits that the Examiner is using hindsight reconstruction as a blue print to reconstruct the claimed invention without teaching of the cited references.

Further Appellant asserts that the cited references further do not provide a motivation for combining any teaching of ranking based on receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time is too short. Appellant respectfully asserts that the only motivation to combine these two ideas comes from the Appellant's own application, even if they were taught. The Federal Circuit has repeatedly warned against using the Applicant's disclosure as a blueprint to reconstruct the claimed invention out of isolated teachings of the prior art. See MPEP §2143 and *Grain Processing Corp. v. American Maize-Products*, 840 F.2d 902, 907, 5 USPQ2d 1788 1792 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Fitch*, 972 F.2d 160, 12 USPQ2d 1780, 1783-84 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

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[2] Dworkin does not teach or suggest receiving a message from an expert that the time limit is too short.

(Fed. Cir. 2002). In this case, the Board of Patent Appeals rejected all of Applicant's pending claims as obvious under § 103. The Federal Circuit vacated and remanded. Citing two prior art references, the Board stated that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to combine the references based on "common knowledge" and "common sense," but did not present any specific source or evidence in the art that would have otherwise suggested the combination. The Federal Circuit held that the Board's rejection of a need for any specific hint or suggestion in the art to combine the references was both legal error and arbitrary agency action subject to being set aside by the court under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). Accordingly, with the suggestion or motivation found in Nielsen taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin, the Examiner has failed to properly establish a prima facie case of obviousness of the invention as a "whole." The Appellant submit the present invention distinguishes over Nielsen taken alone and/or in view of Dworkin for at least this reason as well.

IX. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, Appellant respectfully contends that each claim is patentable. Therefore, reversal of all rejections is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: December 20, 2004

By: _____

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X. APPENDIX

1. A system for managing questions submitted by a person with a question and answered by one or more experts comprising:

a question management server;

a question poser communication interface;

an expert communication interface;

an expert ranking database for maintaining a list of experts in one or more categories along with an item of information indicative of timeliness of an expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by an expert;

an expert set determinator for extracting a set of experts in a particular category from the expert ranking database based on the item of information indicative of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by each expert; and

a sliding window manager for extracting a contiguous subset of the set of experts to whom to send a question received from a question poser.

2. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser; and

a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the feedback received from the question poser.

3. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a question; and

a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question.

4. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser;

an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a question; and

a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question and the feedback received from the question poser.

5. A method on a server for managing questions received via a network from a plurality of client systems comprising steps of:

receiving a question from a question poser using a client system;

extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores, wherein ranking scores are based on timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert;

selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores; and

providing the question to the subset of experts.

6. A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:

receiving an answers from an expert; and

sending the answer to the question poser.

7. A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:

receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an answer provided by the expert; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback response.

8. A method according to claim 6, further comprising steps of:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time taken.

9. A method according to claim 6, comprising a step of:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;

reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in a subject category; and

adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

10. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

reading a time limit;

starting a timer;

waiting until the timer reaches the time limit; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer having reached the time limit.

11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the step of reading a time limit comprises a substep of:

receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

12. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.

13. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;

performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit declination to a preselected declination limit time; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

14. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and

receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

15. A method according to claim 14, further comprising steps of:

storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit was too short;

waiting until a time period has elapsed;

obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;

performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and

adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

16. A method for operating an expert answer web site comprising steps of:

receiving a question from a question poser;

selecting a set of experts on the basis of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert; and

notifying the set of experts of the question.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

generating and sending a web page including the question.

20. A computer readable medium containing programming instructions for managing a question answer system comprising programming instructions for:

receiving a question from a question poser;

extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores, wherein ranking scores are based on timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert;

selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores; and

providing the question to the subset of experts.;

21. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising programming instructions for:

receiving an answers from an expert; and

sending the answer to the question poser.

22. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising programming instruction for:

receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an answer provided by the expert; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback response.

23. A computer readable medium according to claim 21, further comprising programming instructions for:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time taken.

24. A computer readable medium according to claim 21, comprising programming instructions for:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;

reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in a subject category; and

adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

25. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

reading a time limit;

starting a timer;

waiting until the timer reaches the time limit;

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer having reached the time limit.

26. The computer readable medium according to claim 25, wherein the programming instructions for reading a time limit comprises programming instructions for:

receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

27. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.

28. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;

performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit declination to a preselected declination limit time; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

29. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and

receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

30. A computer readable medium according to claim 29, further comprising programming instructions for:

storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit was too short;

waiting until a time period has elapsed;

obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;

performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and

adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

31. A computer readable medium for operating an expert answer web site comprising programming instructions for:

receiving a question from a question poser;

selecting a set of experts on the basis of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert; and

notifying the set of experts of the question.

32. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

33. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises programming instructions for:

sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

34. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

generating and sending a web page including the question.